

# House completes work on redrawing its districts

2 districts pit  
N.O. incumbents  
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BATON ROUGE — After a bruising two-hour debate Tuesday over how many House districts should be in Orleans and Jefferson parishes, the House approved a redistricting plan for its 105 members that increases the number of African-American districts from 27 to 29 and pits two pairs of New Orleans incumbents against one another.

At the urging of House Speaker Jim Tucker, R-Algiers, the House voted 70-28 for his House Bill 1 and sent it on to the Senate. In the past, the Senate has usually respected the way the House has drawn its districts and the House has gone along with the Senate's redistricting.

Tucker's bill started with 29 African-American districts, up from the 27 now in place, but a 30th was added in a House committee. The full House Monday, with the support of Gov. Bobby Jindal's administration, cut the number of minority districts back to 29.

However, the Jindal administration lost 47-49 on another amendment to Tucker's bill by Rep. Tony Ligi, R-Metairie, that would have forced more Democratic incumbents into the same districts in Orleans Parish and saved GOP lawmakers from competing in the same districts. It also would have lowered the African-American percentages in some city House districts.

As the bill heads to the Senate, Reps. John LaBruzzo,

## HOW THEY VOTED

How members of the New Orleans House delegation voted on House Bill 1 to redraw state House district lines. The measure was approved, 70-28:

**YES:** Abramson, D-New Orleans; Arnold, D-Algiers; Billiot, D-Westwego; Burns, R-Mandeville; Cromer, R-Slidell; Giscclair, D-Larose; Henderson, D-Violet; Hines, R-New Orleans; Hutter, R-Chalmette; Leger, D-New Orleans; Lorusso, R-New Orleans; Moreno, D-New Orleans; Pearson, R-Slidell; Pugh, R-Ponchatoula; Ritchie, D-Franklinton; Schroder, R-Covington; Simon, R-Abita Springs; Tucker, R-Algiers; Willmott, R-Kenner

**NO:** Aubert, D-Vacherie; Badon, D-New Orleans; Bishop, D-New Orleans; Brossett, D-New Orleans; Connick, R-Harvey; Henry, R-Jefferson; Jackson, D-Marrero; LaBruzzo, R-Metairie; LaFonta, D-New Orleans; Ligi, R-Metairie; Lopinto, R-Metairie; Stiaes, D-New Orleans; Talbot, R-River Ridge; Templet, R-Gretna; Wooton, R-Belle Chasse

**NOT VOTING:** Monica, R-LaPlace; Smith, D-Norco

R-Metairie, and Nick Lorusso, R-New Orleans, are in the same East Jefferson-Lakeview House district, and Reps. Charmaine Marchand Stiaes, and Wesley Bishop, both D-New Orleans, are in the same 9th Ward-eastern New Orleans area.

Tucker said all other conflicts between incumbents in other parts of the state were worked out in the two days of debate and amendments to the House plan.

Rep. Patricia Smith, D-Baton Rouge, who chairs the Legislative Black caucus, said the plan could have done more for African-American voters. She said that the caucus will consider a legal challenge to the plan.

After Tucker's bill clears the Legislature, the U.S. Justice Department must examine it to see ensure it does not water down minority voting strength.

"This is a pressure-packed process," Tucker said of the process of lawmakers drawing their own lines for fall elections. "This bill is not about you or about me, but about the people's House. ... There was much forging and not all of us can be happy.

"The process is what it is. It has been fair, it has been transparent. ... We have a bill that

I believe is in compliance with state and federal laws. ... I implore each one of you to look at the bill for your communities. It is more important that your communities are represented than your caucuses," whether Democratic, Republican or Black Legislative Caucuses.

The passage of the bill came after a brief recess to allow staff researchers and lawyers a chance to make final technical changes to his bill, enough time to give Tucker a chance to do a headcount to assess the its chances of passing.

Many Republicans in the House were angered that Ligi's amendment did not pass and that Tucker did not vote on it. Jindal Chief of Staff Timmy Teepell and Executive Counsel Stephen Waguespack met with then Republican delegation Monday and asked them to reduce the number of minority districts in the bill from 30 to 29 and to support Ligi's changes.

Ligi's amendments would have placed Reps. Helena

Moreno and Walt Leger III, both D-New Orleans, in the same district and would have allowed LaBruzzo and Lorusso to have their own districts, with LaBruzzo's running from Bucktown to near Tulane University. Lorusso's district would have gone from Lakeview into to Uptown, and also would have reduced the number of African-American voters in some minority districts in the city from 64 percent to 57 percent.

Ligi said he may ask the Senate to reconsider his plan when Tucker's bill is debated there "It ain't over," he said.

The two parishes have been dickering for weeks on ways to draw lines to hurt the fewest incumbents but a solution could, not be reached, said Rep. Cameron Henry, R-Jefferson, who also represents a few precincts in the Carrollton-Riverbend area.

Ligi said his proposal "does not create a new (House) district for Jefferson Parish" but keeps in place the six East Jefferson lawmakers — all white Republicans. He argued that having LaBruzzo's district run into New Orleans, the city's delegation also picks up a member.

"We are maintaining what we have," Ligi said.

Moreno opposed the amendment saying all it does is "serve the people who drew it up. It breaks up the city of New Orleans and its communities of interest."

Leger argued that the smaller population of New Orleans has already cost the city three House seats and the Ligi amendment would cost it another. He said Ligi's plan has also placed minorities in some areas into "strong majority districts so they don't have a voice" in electing someone of their race or beliefs.

"You are telling the federal government, 'Please continue to watch the way we re-district because we can't be trusted,'" Leger said.

"This is wrong," Rep. Neil Abramson, D-New Orleans, said. "This is just slicing and dicing New Orleans up. This is about one parish trying to carve up and slice up one parish at the expense of another parish. This is ramming it down someone else's throat."

Stiaes, who would have been in a district running from the 9th Ward to the French Quarter and into the Garden District under Ligi's plan, told non-area lawmakers that those areas have very little in common.

"This is gerrymandering at its worst. If you want to come

back in July (for a second attempt to draw House boundaries) then vote for this."

"Change is tough," replied Rep. Patrick Connick, R-Harvey. "In Jefferson Parish, we lost 20,000 people (in the 2010 census). In Orleans Parish, they lost 140,000. We have already lost a seat with Speaker Tucker's leaving (because of term limits). We have put in our sacrifice."

Tucker's district is split between New Orleans and Jefferson Parish.

"Jefferson Parish should not have to sacrifice a seat," Henry said. "I am asking you to do what is in the best interest of Jefferson Parish."

Rep. Jeff Arnold, D-Algiers, taking a shot at Jindal adviser Teepell, asked lawmakers to vote their own minds.

"Do not look at the map with a Republican or Democratic eyes, but with the reality of separating neighborhoods. ... This amendment is not good for the people of New Orleans or Louisiana. I don't work for Gov. Teepell, I work for the people."

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